

Ten Top Tips for landlords on fire safety

1. **All landlords have legal obligations as regards fire safety.** At the very least you should ensure that there is an adequate means of escape in case of fire, and landlords of shared and HMO properties will have additional obligations, both under the fire safety regulations, and under the Housing Act 2004.
2. **You should carry out a fire risk assessment for each property you rent out.** This should systematically identify of all fire related hazards within the premises and analyse how those hazards may adversely affect the building and its occupants. It should identify the level of risk that those hazards may present and also identify suitable control measures for any significant findings. It is often best done by a fire safety professional, particularly if you have HMO properties or a large portfolio.
3. **You should fit smoke detectors to all properties.** These can be either battery operated or mains powered. Battery operated smoke detectors need to have their batteries replaced regularly (which tenants may fail to do), those running from the mains may not work if there is a power strike.
4. **Fit self closing doors to all the rooms.** These will contain a fire should there be one, and protect the staircase so everyone can get out.
5. **Ensure that outside doors can be opened at all times from the inside.** If you fit a mortice lock, get one with a thumb turn which can open it from the inside. Having a spare key by the door is less satisfactory as it can get lost.
6. **Consider banning smoking in the property,** and having a fire blanket and a small dry powder extinguisher in the kitchen. However, if your property is an HMO discuss this first with the fire officer.
7. **Carry out regular electrical installation safety checks,** and annual visual checks of sockets, switches, lamp-holders, etc. Make sure chimneys and flues are cleaned regularly.
8. **In HMOs place notices showing exit routes** in the case of fire and the location of the nearest phone for calling the fire brigade.
9. When decorating, **make passages and corridors 'fire sterile'** i.e. do not have anything which can burn on the walls, use emulsion paint rather than wallpaper or hessian covering,
10. Consult your local Housing Officer at the Environmental Health Department or your local Fire Brigade , or retain the services of a private fire safety professional to carry out an assessment and provide a report, before taking any tenants, and preferably before doing any building work. Particularly if your property is an HMO. **Remember it is your investment which is at risk**